



Everyone Matters

Listening Locally. Understanding Diversity. Delivering Excellence.



Customer Care Policy: COR-POL-09 – v5.0

INTRODUCTION

At Southway Housing Trust we are committed to delivering excellent customer care. As a not-for-profit, community based housing provider, it is central to our purpose and key to our success. We were formed to support our customers by providing excellent services and to work with them to improve their homes and strengthen local communities. We rely on their continued trust and support to achieve our vision, which is supported by our 6 core values.

VISION AND VALUES

Our commitment to delivering excellent customer care is reflected within our corporate vision.

Our Vision

We will work in partnership with others to make south Manchester a place that people are proud of. A safe place where people choose to live, work and play.

Our Purpose

Our primary purpose is to provide high quality affordable homes in desirable neighbourhoods where people are happy to live and have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

We also have a wider purpose which is to make best use of our resources to achieve our social and community objectives.

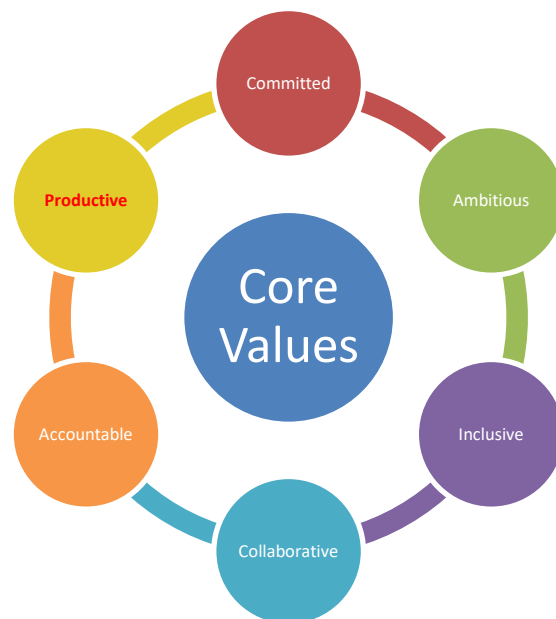
As a housing provider, and the largest landlord in our area, we listen to our tenants and other residents and provide flexible, quality services that balance expectations and needs with costs and benefits. We will provide good quality landlord services that are accessible and cost effective, and target our extra added value services at those who will benefit from them the most.



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Our Values

We have 5 values which influence and shape the way we do things. These represent the qualities we need across our workforce in order to achieve our goals. These values are used in our recruitment and appraisal processes.



COMMITTED

We are committed to achieving our goals and delivering excellent services, and care about our customers and their communities.

AMBITIOUS

We are forward thinking and innovative and make a big impact in our neighbourhoods.

INCLUSIVE

We operate with fairness and respect for diversity at our core.

COLLABORATIVE

We work together with our customers, our local communities and our partners to improve the area and the lives of those people and communities who are less well off.

ACCOUNTABLE

We take responsibility for our actions, are open with our stakeholders and can be trusted to do the right thing.

PRODUCTIVE

We generate value from the way we use our resources including our homes and other assets and through the efficiency of our working practices.



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CUSTOMER STANDARDS

Whenever and however our customers choose to contact us, we want them to have a good experience. We developed our customer care standards with the help of our customers to make sure they accurately reflected their priorities. These are summarised in our ‘Customer Charter’, which is included in our tenancy starter packs and is also available via our website. We review our standards regularly to make sure they are still relevant. The broad service standards that our customers can expect are set out below.



Customer Charter ✓



This is our commitment to **customers** about how we will engage with them over the phone, in person or in their home.

We want to ensure that we are **meeting these standards.**



Customer Charter Standards

- ✓ Our staff will be **friendly and polite**, give their name and **show you identification** when visiting you at home.
- ✓ We will **respond to your enquiry promptly**, providing appropriate advice and support.
- ✓ We will **listen to what you have to say** so that we have a full understanding of your situation and work with you to resolve it.
- ✓ We will **treat you with respect**, communicating with you in a way that is appropriate to your needs.
- ✓ We will ask for and **respond to feedback**, using what you have told us to continuously improve our services.



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Our staff will be friendly and polite, give their name and show you identification when visiting you at home.

All our staff carry identification cards and should show you these whenever they visit you. We collect feedback following most home visits to ensure that our customers are satisfied and have the opportunity to tell us if something went wrong.

We will respond to your enquiry promptly, providing appropriate advice and support.

This means we will:

1. Aim to answer your call within 20 seconds
2. Try to deal with your enquiry immediately
3. Call you back within one working day if the person you need to speak to is NOT available.

Whilst it's not always possible to achieve these targets we monitor performance around these daily. Where we have failed to deliver these standards we will seek to understand the reasons why and try to resolve this.

We will listen to what you have to say so that we have a full understanding of your situation and work with you to resolve it

Most interactions with our customers are followed up by a satisfaction survey. Customers are asked to rate the standard of service using a simple star rating. This also includes a free text field to allow customers to provide further detail.

We aim to deal with 90% of enquiries within a single call and performance against this target is measured throughout the year.

We will treat you with respect communicating with you in a way that is appropriate to your needs

We recognise that different groups within our communities have different communication requirements. We have arrangements in place to adapt our messages to suit the audience. This includes: Translation Services, Braille ID Badges, Hearing Loops in our meeting rooms and the ability to automatically translate our website into the most commonly used languages.



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We will ask for and respond to feedback, using what you have told us to continuously improve our services

All feedback collected is stored, discussed and shared with staff. Where themes are identified we try to use these to improve the way that we deliver service. We share this information via our website and publications under the heading YOU SAID WE DID. Negative feedback is received by our dedicated complaints team. Wherever possible – we will respond to this quickly and proactively and attempt to put things right.



WE AIM TO PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT SERVICE AT ALL TIMES, AND DEAL WITH ALL CUSTOMERS IN THE WAY THEY WISH TO BE TREATED



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We measure performance around these standards and have worked with developers to configure our systems to support an auditable trail of accountability for every enquiry. We monitor and ‘police’ performance across all teams at responding to these enquiries, and we have developed various processes to support this.

Examples:

- Our target for a back office staff member to return customers call is 1 working day. This target is allocated to every referral raised by the Connect Team.
- Daily summaries of outstanding calls are produced and used to chase and/or escalate issues to ensure that this target is met.
- Every staff member has a part to play in achieving our service levels and this information is regularly shared at team meetings and appraisals.

To find out how well we are performing, visit the Performance Section of our website: <http://www.southwayhousing.co.uk/performance/customer-care-performance.aspx>

OUR CULTURE

To ensure that we meet and exceed the expectations of our customers, we have created our own customer care framework called ‘Everyone Matters’. It was put in place to make sure that a high quality of customer care is consistently delivered across the organisation, based around our Vision and Values. It was created by our staff and includes a structured process for the way we use feedback from customers.

We wanted something meaningful that would really make a difference to our customers and improve the way that we work together. The framework is used as a tool to develop and support the various processes and systems referred to throughout this policy.

We aim to be open and transparent in our approach to customer care and welcome questions and enquiries around this subject. If you would be interested in learning more about our framework please contact our Head of Customer Operations, Luke Benfield for more information.

l.benfield@southwayhousing.co.uk



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OUR STAFF

Staff will be trained and supported to ensure that they provide excellent customer services. As part of our framework, staff designed an induction programme that is completed by EVERY new starter and places a high focus on Customer Care.

This includes:

- 1 Day Customer Care Workshop
- 1 Day volunteering at a community event
- A session listening to inbound enquiries within the Customer Hub
- E - Learning module around the Everyone Matters framework

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

We actively seek feedback from our customers and make it easy for them to give us their views and get involved. We won't know if we're getting things right unless we take the time to listen to, and learn from, what they have to say. We rely on this information to both improve and develop our services. With feedback we can see just how well, or badly, we're doing. We can find out what our customers expect from us, understand their priorities and revisit our own if need be.

We generally try to collect feedback following any 'interaction' with our customers. The majority of feedback received can be tracked back to a specific officer and feedback (both positive and negative) is regularly discussed during team meetings and individual appraisals.



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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Southway's Single Equality Scheme, 'Southway – the Fair Way', sets out our commitment to promoting equality and valuing diversity. Some of the Strategic Objectives are:

Fair Access

- For fairness in the way our services are allocated and delivered
- To provide facilities and information which all our customers can access
- For our communication and correspondence to be easy for our customers to understand

Fair Treatment

- For customers to feel they are treated with respect
- For customers to feel that our services meet their individual needs

The Single Equality Scheme is available on our website. It contains further detail, including examples of the ways in which we ensure these strategic objectives are met.

CUSTOMER INSIGHT

Our communities are made up of individuals and we recognise this. To make sure our services are suitable for everybody it is important that we understand everyone's different needs and priorities. We actively research the customer groups that exist within our community on an on-going basis and use this information to make sure our services suit the needs of everyone. It is also used to plan our priorities for the future. A number of specific roles within Southway have been put in place to meet the needs of particular customer groups within our community.



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DATA PROTECTION

Southway needs to collect and use information about current and prospective tenants, and other customers, in order to provide quality customer service. We are committed to doing this in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act (2018). Southway is not legally obliged to comply with the Freedom of Information Act (2000), but we operate within the spirit of the Act. See our Data Protection and Information Sharing Policy for more details.

Operating in line with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts is part of excellent customer service. It helps to ensure that our customers, and their personal information, are treated with respect and fairness, and that we are transparent and accountable for the decisions that affect them.

GOVERNANCE AND LEGISLATION

Standards are monitored across all areas of service by our tenants, tenant scrutiny panel, people and places committee and Board through co-regulation. We also use benchmarking to see how well we compare with similar organisations.

Southway uses the government recognised Customer Service Excellence Standard to audit our approach to customer care. Southway was first awarded the standard in February 2012



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POLICY REVIEW HISTORY	
<i>To be completed during each review</i>	
<p>Previous versions (version number – approved by – approval date – title if different)</p> <p>v1.0 – Board – June 2007 – Customer Care Policy and Standards v2.0 – Board – Nov 2009 – Customer Care Policy – Valuing Customers v3.0 – Board – Jun 2013 – Everyone Matters: Customer Care Policy v4.0-People and Places Committee-Sep 2016- Everyone Matters: Customer Care Policy</p>	
Date of last EIA:	14 July 2019
Review lead by:	Luke Benfield, Head of Customer Operations
Main points or amendments made and reasons	
<p style="color: red;">This policy has been updated to include the 6th value 'productive'</p> <p style="color: red;">It also includes a revised customer charter which was released in 2018. Additional information about the CSE standard has also been included.</p>	
Next review due:	Q2 2020/21
Approval level:	People and Places Committee